

Achieve greater victories this year

The Party, the New People's Army, the revolutionary mass movement and the broadening united front are in a position to gain momentum and achieve breakthroughs in 2006 and beyond on the basis of the significant advances achieved in 2005 and previous years.

The past year, especially the last quarter was marked by victories in the field of armed struggle due to the widespread intensification of tactical offensives nationwide. Great strides were also achieved in advancing and expanding the united front in the struggle to oust the corrupt and brutal Arroyo regime. Major advances were likewise achieved in the struggles led by the legal democratic mass movement. All that is needed is for the latter to gain a little more momentum for it to finally overthrow the utterly detestable Arroyo regime.

We expect to score greater victories and breakthroughs in the various fields of revolutionary work this year. The Party urgently calls on its entire membership, on the people's army and the revolutionary movement to systematically plan and exert their utmost to achieve bigger and quicker advances in the revolutionary



movement. Conditions exist for a possible upheaval in the political arena in the coming months. Let us work faster and strive to compress years of work into a few months.

We must take advantage of the various factors that are rapidly coming to a head, leading to the ouster of the Arroyo regime and the establishment of a new government in the near future. We must consciously plan, vigorously call on and rapidly take steps to further expand and strengthen the anti-Arroyo united front and mobilize

hundreds of thousands to millions of people to take to the streets. This requires greater revolutionary fervor, effort and creativity in combining political and socio-economic issues with various tactics in agitating, educating and mobilizing the masses in their numbers to overthrow the regime.

We must surmount the many obstacles set up by the regime in its attempt to deceive and threaten the masses and suppress their protest movement.

We must overcome the terror

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effect of, and oppose the bloodthirsty regime's systematic assassination and suppression of leaders, activists, and members of the legal democratic movement and the broad base of the revolutionary movement.

We must likewise maintain the momentum that has already been achieved in launching tactical offensives. Ensure the seizure of a big number of firearms. Concentrate offensives on pro-Arroyo units and elements of the military and police, on fascists and the worst human rights violators, and those actively fighting the revolutionary movement. Strike down the regime's fascist monsters. Further strengthen the people's army and the revolutionary forces.

Further intensify political and revolutionary work among the government's military and police forces so as to develop patriotic and democratic aspirations especially among junior officers and the rank and file. Strive to establish alliances at various levels with disgruntled and anti-Arroyo antifascist and enlightened elements and win over the progressive and revolutionary elements among them.

More definite and stable agreements must be forged within broad tactical alliances in the common effort to oust the Arroyo government and cooperate in the establishment of a patriotic and democratic transitional government towards a genuine, just and lasting peace.

All Party units and the revolutionary mass movement are tasked to draw up concrete and specific plans in accordance with these thrusts and the general guidelines laid down by the Central Committee in its statement on the 37th anniversary of the Party's reestablishment.

AB

NPA to launch more intense offensives in Mindanao

Expect the intensification of tactical offensives by the New People's Army in Mindanao in 2006. Thus declared National Democratic Front-Mindanao spokesperson Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos as he presided over the celebration in a guerrilla zone of the 37th anniversary of the Party's reestablishment. Two thousand Party members, Red fighters, activists, members of revolutionary mass organizations, journalists, and many other friends of the revolutionary movement attended the celebration. They acclaimed the victorious tactical offensives launched against the US-Arroyo regime's armed forces in the past year.

Ka Oris said that the NPA's 182 tactical offensives in Mindanao marked a 300% increase over the number of offensives launched in 2004. Of these, 104 were launched in the last quarter of the year. The NPA in Mindanao seized 210 firearms of various caliber, an increase of 40% compared to the 150 firearms seized in 2004. All in all, the NPA netted 196 firearms.

Up to 185 mercenary troops were killed and 147 wounded in the NPA's tactical offensives. On the other hand, 14 Red fighters were killed, 18 were wounded, and nine were captured by the reactionary enemy.

Many victories were achieved in advancing the

armed struggle in Mindanao due to the breadth and depth of the NPA's mass base. According to Ka Oris, there are 38 guerrilla fronts in Mindanao covering 1,500 barangays in 200 towns. The NPA operates in 18 of Mindanao's 25 provinces. The political influence of the armed revolutionary movement is expanding, he said. "More than a hundred thousand people are covered by the revolutionary organs of political power and mass organizations at the town, barrio, community and sitio levels. In expansion and recovery areas, our political influence continues to broaden and has already reached the cities and town centers." The NPA's armed



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partisans now also operate in the cities.

In the field of agrarian revolution, the NDF-Mindanao announced that "through the Party's firm leadership, the antifeudal mass movement has been sustained and expanded amid intense enemy attacks. Thousands from the peasant masses benefited from the reduction of rent for land and agricultural equipment, the reduction of usury, higher farmgate prices for agricultural products and reduced prices for commodities. Related campaigns were launched to raise production and improve health services and education, to achieve cultural advancement, defend ancestral lands and rehabilitate and protect the environment. We have implemented revolutionary justice, maintained peace and order, and put an end to the proliferation of illegal drugs as well as other forms of criminality in our areas."

MRLO established. Notwithstanding intensifying state fascism, the united front in Mindanao continues to expand and gain strength as the US-Arroyo regime grows isolated and weaker. The Moro Resistance and Liberation Organization (MRLO) was also established last year even as cooperation with various Moro groups and individuals is being strengthened.

The CPP Mindanao Commission also reported an increase in Party membership in the entire island. This indicates that the Party continues to expand and take root in barrios, communities, factories, schools, offices and institutions, and has exercised effective leadership in strengthening the armed struggle and the people's revolutionary movement against all reaction and especially against the isolated US-Arroyo regime.

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NPA seizes 30 firearms in Leyte

New People's Army guerrillas seized 30 firearms without firing a single shot in a raid on the Philippine National Police station in Albuera, Leyte on the night of January 6. Seized were 21 M16s and nine .38 caliber pistols. Also seized were a base radio and cellphones.

The guerrillas under the North Leyte Command took advantage of a brownout in Albuera to surround the police station and seize the firearms from its armory. The policemen were unable to fight back.

Red fighters ambush policemen in Masbate

Five policemen were killed in an NPA ambush in Claveria, Masbate on January 6. Based on initial reports, 10 elements from a composite force of the Claveria Municipal Police Office and the PNP Regional Mobile Group (RMG) who were riding a truck were fired upon after the NPA's command-detonated land mine struck their vehicle at about 10:30 a.m. in Sitio San Jose, more than a kilometer away from the Claveria town center. Two policemen were wounded. The NPA seized eight firearms (a cal .30 machine gun, two M14s, four M16s, and a 9 mm pistol).

CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal immediately apologized for the death of three civilians and the wounding of two others in the ambush. The NPA expressed its readiness to assist the bereaved families in any way it can and added that the incident would be investigated by the appropriate NPA command.

On the other hand, Rosal condemned the PNP-RMG for deliberately putting the lives of civilians at risk by commandeering a truck carrying civilians employed by the mayor and using it in its military operations. This, despite being fully aware of the possibility of an armed encounter as they were headed toward Sitio San Jose after receiving reports of NPA presence in the area. Rosal said that allowing the civilians to ride the truck in such a situation was clearly irresponsible.

29 soldiers wiped out in Isabela

Red fighters of the New People's Army wiped out twenty-nine soldiers in two consecutive tactical offensives on December 16 in Jones, Isabela. Among the casualties was Lieutenant Reyes of the Philippine Army's 52nd Recon Coy.

Ka Delio Baladon, spokesperson of the NPA Benito Tesorio Command in Southern Cagayan Valley reported that the NPA received information on December 15 from its intelligence network that enemy troops were entering Jones. The NPA planned to ambush the 25-man unit of the Philippine Army but the enemy occupied the peasants'

houses in Sitio Diaraao Surong, Barangay Dicamay Dos and stayed inside.

The next day, the NPA command decided to deploy a three-man sniper team to harass the military troopers. Meanwhile, the NPA platoon's main force positioned itself nearby in anticipation of possible enemy reinforcements in response to the sniping operations.

With the masses' help, the snipers were informed that the enemy forces were concentrated in three houses. A group of soldiers that had gone to a barn where there were no civilians had been drinking and gambling, while the others were asleep in their hammocks.

The sniper team advanced to a hill about 250 meters from the barn. At about 12:30 in the afternoon, a soldier came out to urinate. The snipers fired on him first and then concentrated on the soldiers inside the barn. Four soldiers were immediately killed in this operation, including a sergeant. The NPA snipers then withdrew to join up with the platoon.

When the NPA platoon heard the gunfire, it swiftly maneuvered to the boundary of Barangays Sta. Isabel and Dicamay Dos, a short distance from the barn, and waited for enemy reinforcements.

The snipers' team had just joined up with the main platoon when it sighted through a telescope the arrival of military troops along the boundary of Sta. Isabel and Dicamay Dos. Enemy soldiers were atop a hill, also using a telescope. The NPA platoon swiftly maneuvered for an ambush. Soon they sighted more than 60 troops of the 52nd Recon Coy descending a hill.

The NPA's ambush position was a wide area of rolling hills that was devoid of cover except for a few thin stands of banana and Gmelina, and a few small huts. The Red fighters hid behind clumps of earth and banana stands, while others lay in wait among the grasses.

The firefight started at about 2:00 p.m. Many enemy soldiers were killed in the first volley of fire, including Lieutenant Reyes, the commanding officer. Because of the barren terrain, the enemy forces could not go up the hills to withdraw. The hills were also slippery with mud after several days of rain. The enemy forces thus took cover behind the Gmelina trees or played dead. With their commander gone, the soldiers fought in a disorganized manner.

The gunbattle lasted until 4:00 p.m. The NPA platoon withdrew when enemy reinforcements arrived with machine guns and mortars. Later, the peasants counted 25 bodies of enemy soldiers taken away.

As usual, the enemy tried to cover up its debacle. Capt. George Domingo, spokesperson of the 502nd Brigade claimed that only six soldiers of the 52nd Recon Coy were killed and only four wounded in Sta. Isabel. He failed to mention their humiliating defeat in Sitio Diaraao Surong, Dicamay Dos.

Latest armed actions in Mindanao

12 firearms seized in Agusan del Sur raid. The NPA seized 12 firearms in an NPA raid on the police headquarters in Loreto town, Agusan del Sur on December 21. Ka Boyet Makatindog, spokesperson of the Front 34 Operational Command in Agusan-Davao reported that Red fighters seized seven M16s, three M14s, a .45 and a 9 mm.

The Red fighters who raided the PNP station arrived aboard four vans at about 2:30 p.m. Of the ten policemen in the station who included elements from the Regional Mobile Group and the Loreto-PNP, only three fought back. Two policemen were killed after a ten-minute firefight. Before the raiders withdrew, they administered first aid on a wounded policeman and made sure that another wounded policeman was brought to the hospital.

Special operation in Tagum City. Operatives of the Ka Paking Guimbaolibot Red Partisan Brigade conducted a special operation on December 20 against the Control Unit Command of the 404th Infantry Brigade of the Philippine Army under Capt. Marcelo Quitiquit, killing four soldiers.

The partisans seized two M16s.

The 404th IB is notorious for its dreadful human rights violations. It has a long list of crimes against the people of Compostela Valley and Davao Oriental, which includes summary executions, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, harassment and strafing of civilians.

Raid on a gambling protector. The NPA seized five firearms in a raid on the house of SP04 Rogelio Mier, a notorious policeman in Zamboanguita, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon on December 20. Seized were an M16, a 9 mm pistol, a .45, two .22 cal. rifles, a night vision telescope, bulletproof vests, a camera and rounds of ammunition. Mier is a protector of gambling operations and heads the Delamance Group which has been responsible for several burglaries and summary executions in the area.

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Hacienda Luisita struggle continues

The struggle of workers, peasants and farmworkers in Hacienda Luisita to achieve genuine land reform continues even as they have scored a series of victories.

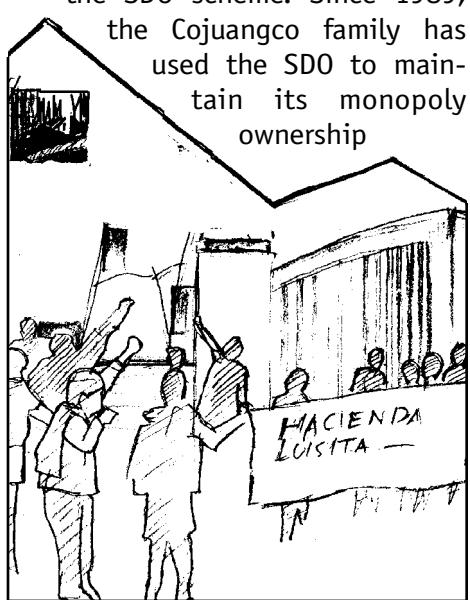
For the past few years, the struggle in Hacienda Luisita has been fraught with violence, tremendous difficulties and heavy sacrifice, including the loss of many lives.

The several decades-long struggle in Hacienda Luisita is now entering a new historical phase. After a strike that lasted more than a year, Hacienda Luisita Inc. (HLI) signed an agreement on December 8 granting the mill and farm workers' main demands (*see related article*).

The farm workers at the hacienda gained widespread support for their call to junk the stock distribution option (SDO) scheme as a result of the strike. The Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) reaffirmed on December 20 its decision to set aside the SDO and called for the government's purchase of 4,915 hectares of HLI farm land and place this under land reform.

The PARC was obliged to make such a decision in the face of the undeniable hardships wrought by the SDO scheme. Since 1989,

the Cojuangco family has used the SDO to maintain its monopoly ownership



of the land and evade land distribution. The Cojuangcos gradually expelled the farmers and workers, used the land for commercial purposes and engaged in land speculation.

The PARC decision serves as an initial victory for the peasants and farm workers of HLI. But clearly, their struggle is far from over. They still have to face the Cojuangco family's machinations as well as stiff resistance from other big landlords implementing the SDO and the many obstacles and loopholes in the land reform law.

The HLI promptly questioned the PARC's jurisdiction over the issue and claimed that only the courts possessed the right to decide on it.

The Cojuangco family has been concocting one impediment and pretext after another to block the actual redistribution of the land. It has filed an appeal that seeks to invalidate or circumvent the PARC decision.

The HLI has likewise invoked the issue of land reclassification in a bid to have up to 67% (or 3,290 hectares) of the hacienda land exempted from the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL). The Cojuangcos had the hacienda's landholdings declared as commercial and residential land as early as 1995, despite a law dating back to 1988 that prohibits the reclassification of sugarlands.

In fact, the Cojuangcos have already sold 594 hectares of the land which was supposed to be distributed to the peasants (at a cost of ₱2 million per hectare) but which it had reclassified as commercial. Of these, 500 hectares were converted into the Luisita Industrial Park subdivision, and the remaining 94 hectares were sold to the Bases Conversion Development Authority

for the Subic-Clark Expressway. The peasants and workers are claiming ₱321 million from the proceeds of the land sale, an amount equivalent to their 33% share in the HLI stocks as per the SDO agreement. But they have received only ₱37 million or a mere 3% of the proceeds.

The Cojuangcos can expect support from other big landlords for their refusal to junk the SDO, especially from those whose landholdings are likewise under the same scheme as a means to evade land redistribution. There are at present 13 haciendas implementing the SDO scheme, with the biggest being Hacienda Luisita. The big landlord-compradors in other haciendas are terrified that peasants would use the victories gained in the Hacienda Luisita struggle as precedents in their bid to have their own SDO agreements abrogated and to assert their right to the land. Even now, there are seven peasant groups in Negros who have declared their desire to have the SDO scheme junked in their areas.

The PARC decision rescinding the SDO is a small first step towards achieving the genuine land reform long aspired for by the peasant masses. The pro-landlord CARL remains one of their biggest obstacles. For the past two decades, CARL has been used merely to deceive the peasant masses and deny them the land that is rightfully theirs.

As demonstrated by the workers, peasants and farm workers of Hacienda Luisita, such aspirations can only be achieved through unity and collective action. Their victory in Hacienda Luisita must serve as a building block in the peasant movement's efforts to reinvigorate the struggle for genuine land reform nationwide.

AB

Luisita strike victories

The workers and peasants of Hacienda Luisita showed admirable courage and steadfastness in advancing their struggles despite the repeated violent onslaughts of the Cojuangco-Aquino families and the Arroyo regime.

The United Luisita Workers Union (ULWU), Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union and the Hacienda Luisita, Inc. management signed an agreement at the picket line on December 8, 2005, more than a year after the strike began. HLI likewise paid back wages and all the workers' other money claims. The strike ended that day.

The workers' struggle bore fruit. Following are provisions in the agreement that benefited the workers and their families:

■ All 34 CATLU officers and the 52 remaining members of the ULWU who had earlier been terminated will be reinstated. (Ricardo Ramos would have been the 35th CATLU officer to be reinstated had he not been murdered by fascists on October 25, 2005.) Thirty-seven farm workers, all of them ULWU members, will be rehired. Fifteen former permanent workers will receive separation benefits and be reemployed as seasonal farm workers. The ULWU will continue to exist and its 19 officers will receive a regular stipend from the company while working full-time for the union.

■ HLI will pay close to ₱21 million to CATLU's 700 members. The amount represents a ₱15 daily wage increase from July 1, 2004 up to the end of the strike, a one-time signing bonus of ₱13,000, a Christmas bonus for 2005 and other benefits. HLI will likewise pay ₱8.2 million representing back wages and other benefits to ULWU's 5,000 members.

■ ULWU will be granted the right to harvest and benefit from the standing sugar cane crop worth about ₱30 million. All ULWU chapters in the ten barangays comprising the hacienda will also each receive ₱200,000 as financial aid for their farming expenses.

■ HLI will continue to recognize the workers' right to remain stockholders of the corporation.

Cracks in the pro-Arroyo coalition

Gloria Arroyo's excessive lust for power is causing greater contradictions between the Arroyo regime and the Filipino people, among various factions of the ruling classes, and even among the various members of the ruling Arroyo clique. This has resulted in new splits within the Arroyo camp.

Fidel Ramos' nearly explicit withdrawal of support for the regime and his furtive meetings and accords with the opposition to overthrow Arroyo have dealt telling blows and caused a deep fracture within the pro-Arroyo coalition.

Ramos and Speaker Jose de Venecia control the LAKAS-Christian Muslim Democrats which comprises the majority in the ruling coalition in Congress and the regime. Ramos has loyalists in key positions in government and the armed forces. Almost half the members of the Consultative Commission on Constitutional Change (ConCom) that Arroyo had set up are Ramos loyalists. Ramos is likewise setting the stage for a faction from the government's armed forces to abandon the regime. His coup plans versus Arroyo have long been the subject of rumor.

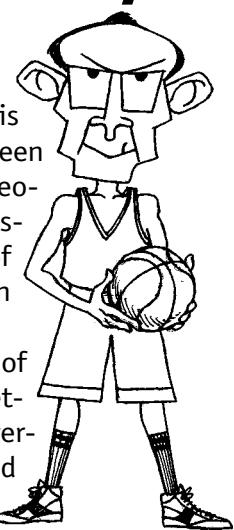
Ramos has persistent ambitions of returning to power or serving as the power behind the throne. He exploited the crisis confronted by the Arroyo regime on July 8, 2005 when a big number of Cabinet members—henceforth referred to as the "Hyatt 10"—resigned en masse. The mass resignation coincided with calls from former President Corazon Aquino, Senate and Liberal Party President Franklin Drilon and big businessmen from the Makati Business Club for Arroyo to resign.

Ramos arrived in Malacañang to "rescue" Arroyo, who then feared that her regime was on the brink of collapse.

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Martyrs of Hacienda Luisita. The victories gained in Hacienda Luisita were achieved through painstaking struggle and selfless sacrifice. The Filipino people will forever remember their martyrs: Jhavie Basilio, Jun David, Juancho Sanchez, Jesus Laza, Jimmy Pastidi, Adriano Caballero, Jessie Valdez.

The following were killed for their political views and involvement in the strike: Marcelino "Ka Marcing" Beltran, peasant leader (December 8, 2004); Tarlac City Councilor Abelardo Ladera (March 3, 2005); Fr. William Tadena (March 13, 2005); Ben Concepcion, regional peasant leader (March 17, 2005); Florante Collantes, Bayan Muna leader (October 15, 2005); Ricardo Ramos, CATLU president (October 25, 2005).



In return for Ramos' support, Arroyo agreed to relinquish power in 2007 and shift to a parliamentary system to pave the way for parliamentary elections and the establishment of a new government. It is a formula that favors Ramos who harbors ambitions of becoming prime minister or president of the new government.

Arroyo, however, reneged on all the concessions she granted Ramos as soon as the political crisis besetting her abated. Her avarice and determination to hold on to power until 2010 and beyond remained as strong as ever.

Arroyo's gameplan became obvious when the majority she appointed to the ConCom proposed the cancellation of the 2007 elections and the extension of the terms of office of all elected officials from the president down to the local levels. The Concom also suggested that Arroyo could remain in power past 2010 under a parliamentary system.

Ramos vehemently opposed these proposals, calling them a "monumental blunder." He issued an ultimatum to Arroyo to declare a definitive position on the proposals by January 1, 2006.

Meanwhile, Ramos ordered his loyalists led by retired AFP Chief of Staff and former Defense Secretary Fortunato Abat to make their move. Abat declared a transitional government and called on the armed forces to abandon Arroyo. While Abat's move may have appeared comical, his declaration signifies that relations between Ramos and Arroyo had become antagonistic.

Malacañang ignored and belittled Ramos's ultimatum and constantly issued statements claiming Ramos' full support for Arroyo.

Ramos' ultimatum passed without Arroyo showing any signs of stepping down from power before 2010. Since then, Ramos has open-

ly distanced himself from Arroyo and moved closer to the anti-Arroyo opposition. Last January 2, he met for more than two hours with Senate President Franklin Drilon and former Senate Minority Leader Vicente Sotto III.

Besides being Senate and Liberal Party President, Drilon heads his party's anti-Arroyo faction and is known to be close to former President Corazon Aquino. Sotto is closely associated with Joseph Estrada and the late Fernando Poe, Jr. Estrada has denied that Sotto is his official representative, but Sotto clearly represents pro-Estrada and pro-FPJ forces.

Ramos has been pressuring Arroyo more and more to abide by their previous agreements. At the same time, he continues to ingratiate himself with the opposition to jockey for position in the new post-Arroyo government.

Arroyo is set to convene a summit of LAKAS-CMD leaders and other allied parties on January 24 to unify and consolidate them behind her. Ramos will be attending the meeting as Chairman Emeritus of the party. But it will be an opportunity for him to castigate "No-El" and Arroyo's obstinate insistence to cling to power. Ramos' delivery to the opposition of a large chunk of the LAKAS-CMD would create a huge crack in the Arroyo coalition.

Meanwhile, there has been news of more frequent talks and growing recruitment by the opposition of Arroyo loyalists in the party and the coalition. Equally rife are rumors of the imminent resignation of more members of the Arroyo cabinet.

There is growing demoralization and discontent among the rank and file, junior officers, and even some middle- and high-ranking officers of the reactionary armed forces.

Col. Efren Daquil of the Philippine Air Force (PAF) divulged

last January 3 that high-ranking officers of the PAF illegally received ₱45,000 in monthly allowances over and above their regular pay, while ordinary soldiers received a mere ₱240 monthly allowance. Daquil also disclosed the disappearance of ₱30 million in PAF funds in 2004, saying that this state of affairs has resulted in restiveness among many elements of the PAF.

On December 14, 2005, Capt. Nicanor Faeldon, one of the junior officers who joined the Oakwood Mutiny in 2003 escaped from detention. Faeldon freely roams military camps and mingles with ordinary soldiers and his fellow junior officers, and has become an icon of popular discontent in the military under the corrupt Arroyo regime.

In a statement released after his escape, Faeldon said he would be working for the establishment of a credible transition government that would give way to fundamental changes for the improvement of Philippine society.

All these events indicate that a growing number of elements in the police and military are taking action against Arroyo's continued rule and are set to defy the chain of command and wage open resistance to the regime when the time is right.

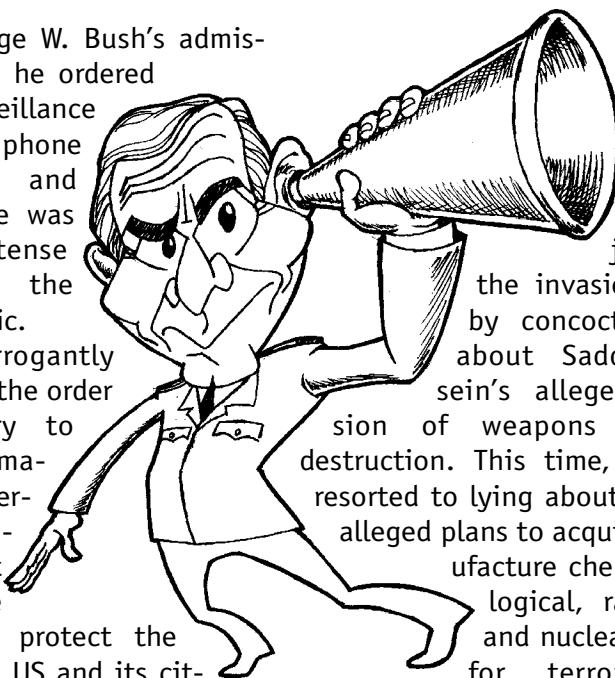
The dwindling Arroyo clique has grown even weaker, more isolated and unstable. There is an emerging possibility that a broader coalition of opposition forces will be formed to hasten the collapse of the ruling regime.

Militant and progressive organizations, as well as other anti-Arroyo forces continue to expand and fortify their ranks to force the ouster of the bogus president this year. Militant and progressive organizations have called for a series of big protest actions starting on January 20 that are bound to bring forth a new first quarter storm in 2006. **AB**

Americans condemn Bush government for spying

President George W. Bush's admission that he ordered the surveillance of Americans' phone conversations and correspondence was met with intense outcry from the American public.

Bush arrogantly admitted that the order was necessary to gather information about terrorist activities, ferret out other possible terrorists and protect the security of the US and its citizens.



In 2003, Bush and his cohorts justified the invasion of Iraq by concocting a lie about Saddam Hussein's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction. This time, Bush has resorted to lying about terrorists' alleged plans to acquire or manufacture chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons for terrorist acts

inside the US. Also being used to frighten the public is the so-called threat of another Al-Qaida attack similar to 9-11.

Civil libertarians, members of the Democratic Party and the broad masses of US citizens deplored Bush's arrogant defense of the program to conduct illegal surveillance on the American people. Bush even had the temerity to lash out at those who leaked the information that US intelligence agencies were illegally spying on their own people. He claimed that the leak has compromised US efforts to combat terrorism and may put the country in grave danger.

Civil libertarians assert that

Meralco takeover

Malacañang made much last December of the possible government takeover and control of Meralco due to the latter's mounting obligations to Napocor. The government announced to the media its plan of controlling Meralco through a debt-for-equity swap arrangement that would take care of Meralco's arrears. Under this arrangement, the government would take possession of an additional 20% of Meralco's shares of stock in exchange for the ₱42 billion that Meralco owed Napocor. Meralco is the country's largest distributor of electricity.

Government currently owns 15% of Meralco while the Lopez family owns 36%. Should the debt-for-equity swap deal push through, government would control almost half of Meralco's shares of stock.

The regime claimed that Meralco failed to pay for ₱42 billion worth of electricity it contract-

ed to purchase from Napocor from December 2001 to the end of 2004. The amount covered 3,600 megawatts of electricity that Napocor was prepared to supply Meralco daily. The regime demanded full payment, along with all the accumulated interest, regardless of whether or not Meralco had consumed the electricity. Meralco has not used electricity from Napocor since it began sourcing its supply (albeit at a higher cost) from the Lopez family-built power plants—primarily Quezon Power Philippines and First Gas Holdings Corporation. Napocor claimed that its huge losses and its decision to raise power costs were due mainly to Meralco's failure to purchase the contracted volume of electricity.

Meralco strongly denied owing Napocor ₱42 billion, saying that it had already reached an agreement with the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) last September

whereby Meralco would pay Napocor ₱14.3 billion only in outstanding obligations. In return, Napocor would have the right to supply Meralco with electricity for three more years. ERC Chairman Rodolfo Albano confirmed the existence of such an agreement.

Malacañang was "shocked" to learn about the ERC-Meralco agreement and withdrew its proposal for a government takeover of Meralco.

In the end, it became apparent that the Arroyo regime's plan for a government takeover was all for show. It used the issue to exert pressure on the Lopez family and to feign concern for the public interest. The regime wanted to punish the Lopez family for the latter's secret support for opposition moves to oust Arroyo. It will be recalled that Arroyo and magnate Eugenio Lopez III, who heads the powerful clan exchanged acrimonious public statements last November. AB

court warrants are required under the Foreign Intelligence Service Act to put individuals under surveillance. Conclusive evidence must first be presented proving that the subject to be surveilled is an agent of a foreign power. Surveillance of a person's communications without the proper warrant is considered a crime.

Bush claims that intelligence agencies do not need court warrants as provided by law because the country's security and freedom are at stake. The US Congress Research Service disagrees with Bush.

The National Security Agency conducts illegal surveillance by satellite and through electronic surveillance equipment and powerful computers that could eavesdrop on telephone conversations and search for suspicious communication on the internet.

Due to the widespread suspicion cast by the Bush regime on Arabs, most victims of illegal surveillance activities are Muslim migrants and visitors or anyone with Arabic features.

The Bush regime has repeatedly trampled upon and violated the civil rights and liberties of the American people. The US government has likewise brazenly trampled on the national sovereignty, freedom and human rights of citizens of other countries in pursuit of its arrogated role as the world's supercop.

The shameless violation of the American people's civil liberties and human rights could no longer be tolerated by other branches of the US government and even by Bush's political party.

The US Senate has refused to grant Bush's request to extend past 2005 the Patriot Act, which the Bush regime has used as the main justification for the barefaced violation of the American people's human rights and civil liberties. AB

Higaonon minorities resist AFP campaign

Higaonon minorities in North-Central Mindanao continue to resist the counterinsurgency campaign launched by the Philippine Army 8th IB led by Col. Andre Colino, with the support of Gov. Oscar Moreno of Misamis Oriental.

NDFP North-Central Mindanao spokesperson Comrade Cesar Renerio said, however, that the military and local government are bound to fail in their bid to win the hearts and minds of the minorities because of their contempt for Higaonon tradition and culture. The government and military have turned a deaf ear to several issues repeatedly voiced by the minorities, including their displacement from their homes and farms in the lowlands after these were taken over by huge corporations and landlords. The Higaonon now live in the mountains.

The Higaonon are once again being threatened with eviction from their ancestral lands in the upland areas of Lantad, Claveria by a government tourism project that would favor local and foreign tourist companies.

Governor Moreno has ordered the construction of toilets for the

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George Bush gets failing mark

George W. Bush is the least popular of the last ten US presidents, according to a survey conducted among Americans by the Chicago-based National Qualitative Center. The survey also revealed that Bush is viewed as the most warlike, the worst for the economy and the least effective.

Other recent surveys reflect how widespread the American people's negative opinion of Bush is. Topping the list of issues the Americans object to are the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq in the name of the "war against terror," the blatant lies concocted by the Bush administration to justify the war, and the growing number of American casualties in a protracted war that the US is incapable of winning.

As a result of these issues, Bush received a 39% approval rating in the last quarter of 2005, his lowest so far.

The American people were angered no end after Bush administration officials' recent admission that they never had information that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction—the issue Bush used to justify the invasion of Iraq.

More than 2,200 American soldiers have been killed in Iraq. In the face of growing demands to bring the American troops home, Bush has declared that there should be no time limits for the Iraqi occupation. Majority of Americans, however, are incredulous with regards to Bush's claims that the Americans are winning in Iraq.

AB

village folk and had the road to Lantad cemented in a lame effort to appease those who stand to lose their land.

The Higaonon's support for the Party and the New People's Army continues to grow in the face of the reactionary government's disregard for the minorities' right to self-

determination and their right to their ancestral lands.

The Higaonon have shown support for the revolutionary movement by, among others, seizing weapons from the reactionary government's armed forces. A member of the local people's militia seized an M16 rifle from a soldier of the 8th IB on October 10 in Sitio Tapol, Barangay Kibanban in the upland

municipality of Balingasag. Swift as an eagle, a Higaonon tribesman snatched the rifle that the soldier had left leaning against a wall when he joined a drinking session. A Higaonon militia member also seized two M16 rifles from soldiers of the 8th IB on December 18 in Barangay Lantad. To avoid embarrassment, the 8th IB concealed these incidents from the media. **AB**

Coalition of the willing dwindle

The number of countries maintaining troops in Iraq to support US aggression and occupation in the name of the war on terrorism is dwindling. Last year, the Dutch government sent home its 1,350 troops in Iraq, bringing to 12 the number of countries who have withdrawn their troops from the so-called Coalition of the Willing. The coalition had 38 member countries when the US and UK attacked Iraq in March 2003.

Other members of the coalition are planning to send home or reduce their security forces this year. Some 20,000 soldiers of various nationalities are currently

supporting 155,000 US soldiers maintaining the military occupation of Iraq. The three countries with the largest contingents of troops next to the US and UK are planning to send their troops home by 2006. These are South Korea (3,200), Italy (2,900) and Poland (1,500). The UK, the US' chief ally in the war, plans to send home its 8,500 troops in Iraq by this year.

Majority of the Japanese people are likewise demanding that their troops be sent home. In a survey, three out of every four Japanese citizens said that the 600 Japanese troops in Iraq should

be sent home by the middle of this year.

The dwindling number of troops the coalition maintains in Iraq indicates weakening support for the US' war of aggression from some of its closest allies. Support from the coalition is further being rocked by the continued vulnerability and defeats suffered by occupation troops in the hands of patriotic Iraqi rebels. More than 20,000 US troops have been wounded in addition to the more than 2,200 American soldiers killed. Two hundred soldiers from other coalition member countries have also been killed. **AB**